

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BUENOS 06311 182151Z

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CPR-01 SSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 IO-10 SIL-01 LAB-04 EB-07 /086 W

----- 028052

P R 182106Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2792

INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION

AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 6311

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, AR

SUBJECT: ANALYSIS OF LUDER'S CABINET CHANGES

REF: A. BA 6301, B. BA 6248, C. BA 6174, AND D. BA 6264

1. SUMMARY: THOUGH VARIOUS VERSIONS (SEE REFTELS--NOTAL) OF HOW CABINET CHANGES CAME ABOUT MAY DIFFER SLIGHTLY ON SOME POINTS, THEY OVERLAP SUFFICIENTLY SO THAT SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS CAN NOW BE DRAWN: A) MRS. PERON KNEW ABOUT CHANGES AND HAD ACCEPTED THEM; B) LUDER IS INCREASINGLY IN COMMAND AND NEW CHANGES CAN BE EXPECTED, BOTH IN CABINET AND IN CONGRESS; AND C) LUDER AND ROBLEDO ARE COOPERATING CLOSELY IN EFFORTS TO FILL POLITICAL VACUUM. END SUMMARY.

2. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT MRS. PERON KNEW ABOUT AND HAD ACQUIESCED TO THE CHANGES. THE NEED FOR CABINET CHANGES HAD BEEN OBVIOUS SINCE THE RECENT MILITARY CRISIS CUT THE LEGS FROM UNDER DAMASCO AND GARRIDO, AND THERE IS NO DOUBT BUT THAT MRS. PERON DISCUSSED THEM WITH LUDER PRIOR TO HER DEPARTURE. WITH PRESSURES FOR CHANGES BUILDING AND LUDER

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 BUENOS 06311 182151Z

KNOWN TO BE IN FAVOR OF THEM, IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT SHE

WOULD HAVE SAID ON SEPT 13 THAT "ANY MEASURES HE TOOK HAD HER FULL SUPPORT" UNLESS SHE WERE WILLING TO GO ALONG WITH CHANGES HE MIGHT MAKE. ONE CAN ONLY ASSUME, THEREFORE, THAT THIS WAS THE CASE. THE CONCLUSIONS ONE CAN DRAW FROM THAT ARE NOT POSITIVE FOR MRS. PERON'S OWN POSITION.

3. LOGICALLY, IF MRS. PERON WERE INTERESTED IN PRESERVING SOME SEMBLANCE OF AUTHORITY, SHE WOULD HAVE MADE AND ANNOUNCED THE CHANGES HERSELF BEFORE DEPARTING--IN ORDER TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT EVEN IN HER ABSENCE IT REMAINS HER RPT HER CABINET AND THAT IT IS SHE WHO COMMANDS. AS IT WAS, THE IMPRESSION CREATED WAS THAT IT IS NOW LUDER'S CABINET AND THAT IT IS HE AND NOT SHE WHO GIVES THE ORDERS. THIS IS PROBABLY A TRUE IMPRESSION. IF SHE WAS ALREADY TO ONE SIDE OF THE EQUATION, SHE IS DOUBLY SO NOW THAT LUDER HAS TAKEN COMMAND. EVEN IF SHE SHOULD COME BACK FROM SICK LEAVE AND RESUME THE PRESIDENCY, THE POWER WILL NOT BE HERS. IT IS LUDER, ROBLEDO AND CAFIERO--AND POSSIBLY OTHERS--WHO MUST BE LOOKED TO TO FILL THE VACUUM. CERTAINLY MRS. PERON CANNOT FILL IT.

4. ANOTHER FACET OF THE SITUATION WHICH HAS BECOME CLEAR IS THAT LUDER AND ROBLEDO ARE WORKING CLOSELY AND APPARENTLY HARMONIOUSLY TOGETHER (ACCORDING TO LA OPINION'S HERIBERTO KAHN, THEY HAVE BEEN FRIENDS SINCE THEIR STUDENT DAYS). ROBLEDO WAS SURPRISED BY THE TIMING RATHER THAN THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT ON SEPT 15 THAT HE WAS THE NEW INTERIOR MINISTER. CLEARLY, LUDER HAD EARLIER DISCUSSED THE POSSIBILITY WITH HIM, AND WHILE ROBLEDO WOULD OBVIOUSLY WISH THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS TO BELIEVE HE PREFERRED TO REMAIN AS FOREIGN MINISTER (AND HE SO TOLD THE BRAZILIAN AMB--SEE REF A), IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT HE WOULD HAVE REJECTED THE INTERIOR MINISTRY, A POST WHICH BETTER COMPLEMENTS HIS POSITION AS FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF THE PERONIST PARTY. IN ANY EVENT, HE HAD SOME PRIOR INKLINGS THAT HE MIGHT REPLACE DAMASCO. BUT HE HAD NOT EXPECTED IT TO COME WHEN IT DID. IT WAS PROBABLY LAID ON FOR AFTER HIS RETURN FROM THE UNGA, OR EVEN LATER. DAMASCO, HOWEVER, APPARENTLY FORCED LUDER'S HAND, CHALLENGING THE LATTER TO FIRE HIM IMMEDIATELY IF HE INTENDED TO DO SO AT ALL.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 BUENOS 06311 182151Z

5. LUDER RESPONDED DECISIVELY AND ACTED LIKE A CHIEF EXECUTIVE. HE FIRED DAMASCO OUT OF HAND AND SENT OUT A NOTE ANNOUNCING ROBLEDO AS HIS REPLACEMENT. DAMASCO RETIRED FROM THE SCENE AND, DESPITE HIS SURPRISE, ROBLEDO ACCEPTED. LUDER THUS DEMONSTRATED THAT HE CAN MAKE HIS DECISION STICK.

6. MRS. PERON'S IMAGE IS LIKELY TO WANE FURTHER, AND LUDER'S TO WAX, AS ADDITIONAL CABINET CHANGES ARE MADE. MORE-OVER, THE CONGRESS--AND ESPECIALLY THE SENATE--IS ALREADY ADJUSTING TO THE NEW STYLE SET BY LUDER. WITH THE LATTER BEING NOW AT THE CASA ROSADA, SOMEONE ELSE MUST PRESIDE AT THE SENATE. AS IF BY UNSPOKEN AGREEMENT, HOWEVER, THE SENATE REFUSED TO TURN THE GAVEL OVER TO CARLOS EVANS, THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE (PERSONA NON GRATA BECAUSE HE HAD EARLIER PLAYED SUPINE ROLE VIS-A-VIS MRS. PERON AND LOPEZ REGA); RATHER, EVANS WAS FORCED TO ASK FOR A LEAVE OF ABSENCE AND IT IS NOW EXPECTED THAT NEW ELECTIONS MAY BE HELD SO THAT A FIRST VICE PRESIDENT MORE IN TUNE WITH THE NEW SITUATION CAN BE BROUGHT FORWARD. (EVANS' INDISPOSITION BRINGS UP AN AMUSING AND IRONIC SITUATION: AMERICO GARCIA, THE SECOND VICE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, IS ILL; HENCE, THE GAVEL PASSES TO PRESIDENT OF THE VARIOUS COMMITTEES IN ORDER OF SENIORITY. ALBERTO FONROUGE, AS PRESIDENT OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITTEE, IS PRESIDING NOW, BUT HE LEAVES NEXT WEEK FOR A TRIP TO USSR AND THEN A LEADER GRANT VISIT IN US. SENATOR VICENTE SAADI, NEXT IN LINE, IS ALSO GOING TO USSR, IF HE RECOVERS FROM PRESENT ILLNESS. THAT BRINGS UP ALEJANDRO DIAZ BIALET, WHO WAS PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT OF SENATE UNDER CAMPORA AND WAS BOUNCED IGNOMINIOUSLY WHEN LATTER RESIGNED. AFTER MORE THAN TWO YEARS, HE WILL AGAIN TAKE UP THE GAVEL AND PRESIDE OVER THE UPPER HOUSE.)

7. CLARIFYING NOTE: RICARDO LUDER BECOMES PRIVATE SECRETARY TO PRESIDENT, BUT JULIO GONZALEZ STAYS ON AS TECHNICAL SECRETARY. NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT WILL BE FORMER AND NOT LATTER, HOWEVER, WHO HAS ACCESS TO INTERIM PRESIDENT, HIS FATHER.

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PAGE 04 BUENOS 06311 182151Z

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, CABINET, PERSONNEL MOVEMENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 SEP 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BUENOS06311
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750324-0515
From: BUENOS AIRES
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750937/aaaabgfd.tel
Line Count: 154
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 BUENOS AIRES 6301, 75 BUENOS AIRES 6248, 75 BUENOS AIRES 6174, 75 BUENOS AIRES 6264
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 SEP 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <11 DEC 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ANALYSIS OF LUDER'S CABINET CHANGES
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, AR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006